



**AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE  
OF THE RUSSIAN MFA  
ON THE CRIMES COMMITTED  
BY THE KIEV REGIME**

**VIOLATIONS  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
HUMANITARIAN LAW  
BY THE KIEV REGIME  
REGARDING TREATMENT  
OF PRISONERS OF WAR:**

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**"SECRET PRISONS"**

**2025**

*Cover photo: Hand of a Russian serviceman with his index finger cut off in three steps without anaesthesia during torture in Ukrainian captivity. Source: Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry on the Crimes committed by the Kiev Regime, screenshot of a video footage of communication with a prisoner of war.*

The information on violations of provisions of the Geneva Convention III and Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions by the Ukrainian side provided in the Report has been collected by Rodion Miroschnik, Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry on the Crimes committed by the Kiev Regime, based on the testimonies of Russian prisoners of war returned home in 150 to 150 prisoner exchange conducted on 5 February 2025.

### **Legal provisions**

Torture and cruel treatment are strictly prohibited by the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). No exemptions, derogations or excuses are allowed. The international law requires respect for life, well-being and dignity, as well as humane treatment of those in the hands of belligerent parties. The responsibility for the treatment of prisoners of war and protected persons lies with the Detaining Power, irrespective of individual responsibility. States are obliged to take all necessary measures to ensure respect for the rights of prisoners of war, which are essentially set out in the Geneva Convention III and Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. In the event of death or serious injury to a prisoner of war (POW), the Detaining Power is bound to immediately open an official investigation and bring those responsible to justice. Torture and inhumane treatment in armed conflict constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

## **Systematic Violations of POWs Rights**

The overwhelming majority of the interviewed servicemen returned to Russia from Ukrainian captivity as a result of the exchange described systematic torture, abuse and humiliation suffered by the soldiers who had found themselves at the mercy of the Ukrainian Armed Formations (UAF). Most of the cases of abuse took place in UAF "secret prisons" located in the grey zone as well as in other territories including those far away from the battle contact line. The Ukrainian leadership and authorities at all levels are well informed of the existence thereof, because most of such facilities are visited by representatives of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU), Defence Intelligence of Ukraine and other Ukrainian special agencies in possession of unofficial information on POWs ending up there, while the capacities of these institutions are employed by them to "knock out" the information they need, using prohibited methods.

### **"Secret Prisons" of the Kiev Regime**

Almost all of the interviewed POWs confirm the existence of an extensive network of "secret prisons" as well as of torture and secret burial sites directly related to them. They are generally located in the basements of private houses, sheds, garages, in half-finished buildings, as well as in the premises of industrial enterprises. According to the respondents who were kept in Ukrainian "secret prisons," the latter were located in the Russian territories, temporarily controlled by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), in the Kursk Region, DPR and LPR, as well as in Ukraine – in the Sumy, Kharkov and Dnepropetrovsk Regions and in Kiev. The POWs say that the worst treatment was applied to those who had got to "secret prisons" being under control of *Azov*, *Aidar* and other Nazi-type units. For the purposes of simulated alleged "unawareness," the UAF's leadership was not formally informed, at least for a certain time span, on prisoners staying in such confinement facilities. They are not accessible for visits by any human rights organisations or official international structures. "We can do whatever we want to you until you are accounted for," Ukrainian militants avowed, addressing the POWs.

*"Let's drown you in the swamp, because you're an unofficial captive. We mean you are missing anyway, so we can do whatever we want (to you),' they suggested."*

*a Russian POW, referring to abuse of unaccounted prisoners.*

There is a certain confidentiality protocol in force in the premises of "secret prisons". Staff members usually cover their faces wearing masks or balaclavas and use nicknames in communicating with each other. Captured soldiers are brought in and taken out of such institutions blindfolded. In many prisons, the detainees spend all their time blindfolded and without access to the outside on the whole. Medical aid is not provided. Access to prisoners is restricted.

The POWs' stay in such unauthorized places of detention can range from several days to six months. The conditions of confinement in those places are neither regulated nor checked by the authorized official authorities. At the same time, given the number of "secret prisons" and practices prevailing therein, the official Ukrainian authorities are well aware of their existence. The interviewed POWs often describe such places as basements or other blind rooms, where dozens of POWs can be kept, no matter how many of them the floor space can accommodate.

It is extremely rare that those who arrange these secret sites to detain prisoners comply with any nutritional standards. The prisoners who had spent over two weeks in such a prison in Pokrovsk (Krasnoarmeysk) indicated that they were not given food at all but water, as far as there was actually no WC envisaged in the premises.

### **POW Abuse**

The UAF start to abuse POWs long before they are brought to transit or unofficial places of detention. The POWs point out that the AFU militants have a practice of finishing off injured Russian soldiers, as well as executing combatants who have laid down their arms and whose delivery to detention places is considered for some reason unpromising by the Ukrainian side.

*"We told them that we had an injured there. They came in and shot him down. He could have been bandaged, provided medical assistance and taken as a prisoner. But he was shot down – they didn't bother."*

*a Russian POW, referring to executions of combatants, who laid down their arms.*

It has become a common practice for the AFU militants to systematically beat POWs when transferring them from hand to hand in process of transportation from one confinement place to another. At the checkpoints, they subject POWs to humiliating search and "welcoming beatings" while moving them to another vehicle, with their eyes blindfolded and hands tied up. The same happens at the arrival to places where "secret prisons" are located.

*"We stop at the checkpoint, the rear door goes open... they approach and start pummeling us. With their guns and batons... they just start beating us to death. It was six times the same."*

*a Russian POW, referring to "welcoming beatings."*

## **Cruel Treatment**

Those POWs who had ended up in "secret prisons" were subjected to all-out pillage. They were stripped of valuables, phones and bank cards. The prisoners got beaten to revealing their password to access online bank applications. It has become systematic to blackmail families in order to force them to transfer a ransom for their beloved ones, lest they be killed. Representatives of certain Ukrainian agencies tried to force the POW's family to commit a crime against Russia's interests by threatening to kill him, in particular to gather secret data for the benefit of Ukraine or commit a terrorist attack.

*"There were two keepers: one bearded and the other was a bit smaller. They mostly beat with batons. I had a phone. They forced card and phone PIN numbers out of me. Once you don't tell, they beat you."*

*a Russian POW, referring to robberies in "secret prisons".*

The Ukrainian militants have arranged torture chambers in places of secret detention of prisoners, where the captured Russian military are subjected to severe beating, intimidation and abuse. The tormenters make use of a whole arsenal of atrocities, i.e. electric chairs, drowning, nudity, threats of sexual violence, non-medical amputation of limbs, baiting, as well as mock executions.

*"They started chopping off my finger in three steps. They used a huge tree pruner for that. Like this, then like that and like this again (he points to the spacing where the finger once was). They pulled out four of my teeth using pliers."*

*a Russian POW s, referring to physical abuse practised by AFU militants.*

There is virtually no qualified medical aid provided to POWs in unofficial captivities. Exclusion is made to get a POW to a medical institution to "dress up," i.e. to conceal the consequences of beatings and abuse before transferring POWs to official detention centres for internees or POWs. The pseudo-medical procedures in "secret prisons" imply mostly penalty-like actions, namely amputation of limbs without sedation or castration threats. The injured servicemen demonstrate consequences of incisions in the genital area, teeth pulled out without anaesthesia, poorly closed wounds that were not allowed to heal by driving foreign objects in. Subsequently, even after being taken to a pre-trial detention centre, the situation with the provision of medical care did not improve.

*"The Red Cross arrived. They had doctors. They said I had to be taken to the hospital. Amputation had to be done or gangrene would set in. 'We don't care. We know ourselves what to do,' they (staff of the pre-trial detention centre) reacted. And the doctor cut off my toes on one of my feet while I was conscious. Without anaesthesia."*

*a Russian POW, referring to pseudo-medical care.*

It is a mass practice – not only in "secret prisons" but also in official detention centres for POWs – when they are forced to record videos, under threat of death, and make false accusations against the Russian leadership and coerced confessions to alleged crimes.

## **Lack of International Response**

Although many of the abovementioned facts are not new to international human rights organisations, the Kiev regime has not been subjected to any substantial international pressure. A large and extensive network of "secret prisons," unofficial detention centres and transit sites for POWs keep actively operating on the territory of Ukraine. The number of POWs who have been murdered or tortured to death cannot yet be precisely calculated, but testimonies about the existence of secret cemeteries are mounting.

Human rights organisations are satisfied with limited interviews with Russian POWs done in detention and under direct pressure from Ukrainian guards, comparing their testimonies with those of free former Ukrainian POWs after their return to the home country.

Such practice distorts the true picture of what is going on and allows the Kiev regime's systematic and deliberate IHL violations to be presented as minor flaws in its activities. There have been no reports of investigations into the existence of the network of "secret prisons" in Ukraine so far. The well-known facts of systematic killings, atrocities and abuse of POWs by representatives of the Kiev regime fail to provoke international outrage, which looks more like a cover-up of criminal acts committed with the tacit consent of the states that sponsor the Ukrainian neo-Nazis.

## EXTRACTS FROM POW TESTIMONIES

**Case No. 1 – Maksim Valeryevich Lapshin, born in 1984, serviceman of the Air Assault Brigade of the Airborne Forces, was taken prisoner in the Kursk Region in autumn 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as the result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**



Maksim Valeryevich Lapshin, serviceman of the Air Assault Brigade of the Airborne Forces, was taken into Ukrainian captivity in the Kursk Region blast injured and unconscious after shelling:

"I was on my way to help the group ahead of me. I came under fire and was attacked by a kamikaze (drone). It exploded near me. I came around all in blood. I recollect myself having my bullet-proof vest taken off me. <...> A car drove up. First, they tied me up and blindfolded me. I was put in the boot, and then all hell broke loose. They brought me down to a basement somewhere, took off the tape and started beating."

### **Beatings in captivity:**

"I was abused, battered, strangled and subjected to waterboarding for a long time. They showed me a video of a guy lying on the ground. They were questioning him. 'I have nothing to tell you,' he said. And they shot him dead. Then they continued to beat me with some furniture legs. They beat me and beat me, covered my head with a cloth, shut my mouth, poured water onto my face from a bottle, i.e. subjected me to waterboarding. 'You have time to think until morning,' they said afterwards. And then they beat me till morning. I don't know if it was really till morning or not, but it felt like a lifetime. Then they tied me up again and we drove off. 'Let's drown you in the swamp, because you're an unofficial captive. We mean you are missing anyway, so we can do whatever we want (to you),' they said. Then they brought me to some place and led somewhere. They started to hang me. At one point they took the tape off. It was a construction site or a dilapidated building. I hung there for some time too; then they lowered me down, beat and kicked me. They kicked and kicked and kicked me. 'Kill me. What for abusing me?' I said. 'No, they retorted, you are not going to die that easily'."

In one of the underground prisons, POWs **were forced to hard physical labour:**

"I was finally brought to a one-storey house and taken to a room with five other people in it. I had a talk with those guys. They said they had been 'drudging' as slaves for five months already. Some were working on a construction site; some were lugging boxes in a warehouse."

**Beatings in Kharkov prison for POWs:**

"When I arrived in Kharkov... There were eight of us. We ended up together with 40 people in a cell. 'Quiet, quiet, keep silent, better whisper,' everyone was saying. 'What's happened, guys? What's the matter?' I asked. 'There're guards in the shift, they have Vasya 'Oper,' a big brute. They simply come in and beat everyone up. They take you out into the corridor and beat with pipes and batons'. In short, everyone has been badly battered."

**Treatment of POWs by a local medical worker:**

"Once or twice a week at most, a woman came. She said she was a paramedic or a doctor. 'Well, mother f\*\*\*ers, haven't you kicked off yet?' she used to ask. That was the treatment."

**Case No. 2 – Andrey Yuryevich Smetskoy, born in 1985, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner in the territory of the LPR in October 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

Andrey Yuryevich Smetskoy, serviceman of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, who was taken into Ukrainian captivity in the LPR bordering the Kharkov Region told about the **imprisonment conditions** of POWs:



"Food was given only once per day. Porridge was cold. Those who screwed up or left a mess behind – there was sand and a tray with blankets – so anyone who left a mess behind would stay without food for 2 or 3 days."

#### **Description of torture he underwent while in Ukrainian captivity:**

"In Kharkov pre-detention centre, I was beaten too. With plastic pipes and rubber hoses. They would torture me for about 15 minutes, but hard. They kicked me in the ribs, up to the point where they did not break but cracked so hard I could not breathe. Once a week as a matter of course. Not just me, the others too."

#### **A POW was battered to death in public:**

"A guy was battered to death in two hours. In Kharkov pre-detention centre. They would come to us once a week, wearing no chevrons, nothing. They had balaclavas or masks on. They would simply walk in and pick up a victim among those who didn't want to cooperate with them. That is, to tell where the air defence, the units and the army were stationed. They would take them out or batter them on the spot. Usually they would take them downstairs. He refused to cooperate. He didn't give them any information and he said 'I will not join the RVC (traitor unit), no matter what you do to me. I have nothing to tell you.' So he was battered right there, kicked to death. They threw him on the floor and simply kicked to death. It took them almost two hours. They could have taken him to hospital – maybe the doctors would have been able to save his life – but they didn't do that. He died. They laid him on a black stretcher and took downstairs."

#### **Butchers with no insignia:**

"They were wearing balaclavas, no chevrons. They had no insignia whatsoever. They would simply walk in wearing green uniform of the same colour and start to pick up a victim."

**Case No. 3 – Maksim Vladimirovich Likhachev, motorized rifleman, was taken prisoner near the settlement of New York, DPR, in July 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

Maksim Vladimirovich Likhachev received a bullet wound to his arm in a battle near the settlement of New York, DPR, lost consciousness and was taken prisoner. After being captured, he was immediately **subjected to torture:**

"I was blindfolded and my hands were tied up. They took me across the trenches, into the truck and to some village. And then it all started.



I had a mobile phone with me, with a card in it. <...> When they started searching me, I remembered about the phone. They took it out. He must have been distracted. So I took advantage of the moment. I grabbed the phone and smashed it against the cobblestones. <...> And then all hell broke loose. They started chopping off my finger in three steps using a huge tree pruner. Like this, then like that and like this again (he points to the spacing where the finger once was). They pulled out four of my teeth using pliers."



**Dogs set on prisoners:**

"They would abuse us. There were Ruslan and Alexey. They had two dogs. One dog's name was Fedya and the other's Roxy. The dogs would gnaw on me. These are the bite marks. You can see the scars from electrocution and dog attacks on my arms and legs.

**Torture by administration of electric shocks:**

"There's an iron chair, just a chair welded from a piece of iron; a wooden floor. There is sort of a metal bathtub on a rubber mat. They put prisoners' feet in there and tie them up. A crocodile clip of a welding machine is attached to one side here (points to his right foot). The second one, bigger, is attached to the neck. The generator starts and the current begins flowing, the power generator that is."

**Description of electric shock torture:**

"It felt like everything in my head was exploding. Most of the pain was in the head – the head and the neck. You can't breathe, you can't do anything. Following the first discharge, I voided spontaneously. My entire jaw was sore. I could not open my eyes right away. There was a terrible pain in the back of my head and in my temples. It was inexplicable. And my chest hurt very badly, like being hit hard with a sledgehammer. This went on for 40 minutes."

**Before the torture began, Ukrainians made videos and took photos of POWs while they were still "intact" to prepare a rosy and humane picture for the media:**

"Before they started beating me, a woman and a man came. They took pictures of me with a camera and made a video in which I introduced myself – my position, rank, where I lived, where I was born. I guess they wanted to publish it later to show me in captivity, as if intact. That was when it all started. That is, before the torture, they made a video of me as though everyone had treated me humanely, and then all hell broke loose."

**Description of torture involving teeth-drawing:**

"They pulled my teeth out with pliers. There were pliers, but sharpened ones. They had sharp edges. So, taped round metal pliers were put (in my mouth)... They put it in your mouth, and you cannot move. That's it: they pull out tooth after tooth. I mean, they do not pull out all four teeth at once, but one every hour, then every two hours. It was Alexey who pulled my teeth out. Ruslan cut off my finger. There were six of them over there. They also had a woman there, who either rented this house to them, or cooked for them, I never understood."

**Absence of medical assistance:**

"I lay for three days with a gunshot wound. They stuck some kind of pin in the wound. They asked me whether it hurt me or not. Of course, it hurt, the wound was gaping."

**Hospital in Kharkov, then transfer to Dnepropetrovsk:**

"As three days passed, one of their commanders came. I had three ribs broken – the seventh, eighth, and ninth. They saw that I was already dying. I was literally suffocating. They were told to take me to hospital. I was blindfolded and my hands and feet were tied up. I was put in the boot of the Niva car and transported in a hospital near Kharkov, where I had a needle punctured in my side and fluid pumped out of it. The fluid came together with my blood, I remember it well. A small tube and a jar were put together and taped, and I was told: 'If you want to live, make sure that the small tube does not come out, otherwise you'll suffocate.' From that hospital I was transported to the hospital in Dnepropetrovsk in the same Niva, lying with this jar in the boot, all broken."

**Case No. 4 – Ilya Sergeyevitch Rumyantsev, born in 1992, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner in the Serebryanskoye forestry in the territory of the DPR in November 2023. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

Ilya Sergeyevitch Rumyantsev was captured in the Serebryanskoye forestry in the territory of the DPR in November 2023 during a fight against one of the *Azov* units. After he was brought to the *Azov*'s base, **interrogations and beatings** began:

"We were interrogated. When you don't answer their questions, you are beaten. I had my two front teeth knocked out with a foot. They hit me in the ribs, jumped on and beat my arms, so that I 'could not take a gun in my hands anymore!'"



**Theft of personal belongings and family blackmailing:**

"As for my personal belongings, they took my watch and phone. They withdrew 140,000 roubles from my Sberbank card. They threatened my family. They wrote to my wife. My wife would not even tell me precisely what they had written, there were

terrible things. They tried to recruit my parents. They proposed to collaborate with them. My parents were told, 'If you do not pay money, you will never see your son.' My mother transferred 200,000 roubles to them."

### **Torture in captivity:**

"They closed us in a sauna. They made us listen to their anthem. They tortured us. They tortured one person at a time. They came in, picked one person and told us that they were going to rape him. Fortunately, they did not do this. They took us out one by one and beat us with a stick, from head to toe. When it was my turn, they told me, 'Get down on the floor.' I got down, arms out in front. And they also started to beat my arms with a stick. They broke and injured two fingers on my right hand. Here too, my hands were all swollen from bruising. They twisted my arms. They twisted my right arm in such a way that I could hear a crunch. I have one collarbone bigger than the other now. My arm went numb. They hurt me from head to toe. They beat the heels on purpose, so that the blows reverberated through the organs. It went on like this for two days."

Ukrainians blackmailed relatives of the POWs held in the **SSU underground prison**. They contacted the parents of Ilya Sergeyevich and tried **to persuade them to collaborate**. His father was a retired military pilot. They demanded that he tell them information about military pilots of the Russian Armed Forces, **otherwise his son would be shot**. His parents **rejected to collaborate with the SSU**.

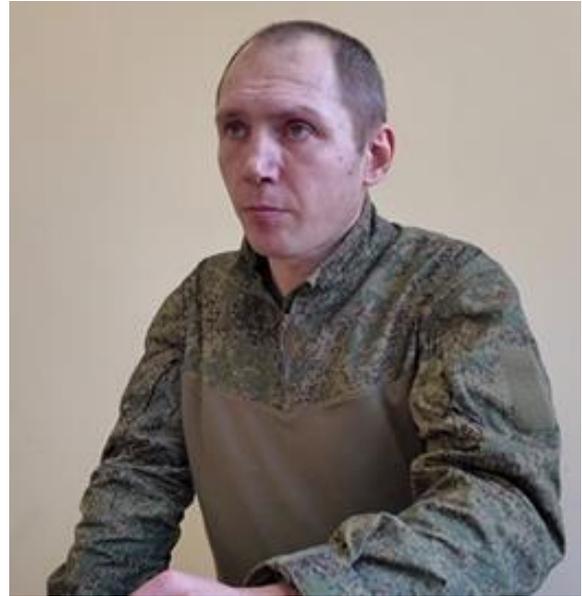
### **Mock execution by shooting:**

"They told me, 'You have 20 minutes left to live. We will leave now, and you sit here and think.' After that, they came in and asked me, 'What's your last wish?' I told them, 'I just want to smoke.' They gave me a cigarette, and I smoked. They told me to put on a hat. I pulled the hat down over my eyes. They took me out to the corridor and put me against the wall. I heard the click of a rifle's bolt. They told me, 'That's all.' I leaned my head against the wall. I had the only wish for them. I asked, 'May I ask?' They said, 'What?' I told them, 'Just do not shoot me in the head.' They asked, 'Why?' I said, 'If you give my body back, this will spare my parents the pain.' They said, 'OK.' After that, a shot rang out. I already thought it was all over. But it was just a blank shot. They were psychologically pressuring me."

**Case No. 5 – Vladimir Alexandrovich Kolotvin, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner in the territory of the LPR in July 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

Vladimir Alexandrovich Kolotvin was captured in the territory of the LPR bordering the Kharkov Region in July 2024:

"There was an explosion, and I lost consciousness. I blacked out, regained consciousness, and there were already two men standing there. They pinned me down. They took me to a place first, where they battered (kicked) me. They then put me in a car. They drove me somewhere in the car, where they stomped (beat) me again, I mean, with their feet."



**Beatings in an unofficial detention facility in a settlement near the place of captivity:**

"They held me in a basement for two days. They beat me with batons nonstop. They broke my jaw and cracked my head."

**Beatings in the captivity:**

"They never identified themselves. There were two of them: one bearded and the other was a bit smaller. They mostly beat with batons. I had a phone. They forced card and phone PIN numbers out of me. Once you don't tell, they beat you. They forced me to haul sand wearing nothing but my underwear, and beat me with batons."

**Beatings on the way to a "secret prison":**

"They drove me to that settlement. They battered me all the way down. This was because they used several cars. I was constantly blindfolded and had my hands tied up. Every time they changed cars, they battered me again."

**Dogs set on prisoners:**

"We were kept in a cellar. There were two dogs there – Rottweilers named Senya and Fedya. <...> They set the dogs on us. The dogs bit us. One sank its teeth into my arm, but they dragged it off... They purposefully set the dogs on us. Many of us

were bitten. The dogs were set on most of the people who were held in that basement."

**Kolotvin was tortured in the basement of a private house for two days:**

"They put me to an electric chair. They clamped wires to my ears. They twisted, causing short circuits. On the chair (they tortured me), they fixed wires. The current (was sent) through the chair. Then, they stripped me and beat me with batons, demanding that I give them my card PIN numbers. If I refused, they resumed torturing me with electricity."

**Electric shock torture:**

"The shocks were full-force. Everything would go black. And when you lost consciousness, they would pour water over you to wake you up."

**Eight months without medical care resulting in a broken jaw and an arm never healing properly:**

"They broke my jaw and arm right there in the basement. When they brought me to Kharkov, I was all covered in bruises. All they did was giving me an orthopaedic cast and bandage me. Nothing more."

**Beatings resulting in the broken jaw:**

"When they sent me to the detention facility, the broken jaw had already healed. I started to eat somehow. But I still cannot bite. When they hit me with the iron stick, three teeth flew out and my jaw was broken. And my head was cracked. I was covered in blood."

**It were *Azov* and *Kraken* militants who carried out torture**

"I do not know their names. But I know that *Azov* and *Kraken* fighters were there."

**Torture to rob:**

"I did not see people being killed, only tortured. They put different things in wounds. They mostly demanded card PIN numbers in order to transfer money to their accounts."

**Food:**

"In Kharkov food was poor. In Kiev, well, it got a little bit better. But I could not eat much since my jaw was broken. I lost so much weight. I am 180 cm tall. When I returned, I weighed about 60 kilos. Before I had weighed almost 100 kilos. I lost about 40 kilos."

**Case No. 6 – Yuri Petrovich Nikolayev, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner in the territory of the Kursk region, in November 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

He was captured in the Kursk area on 9 November 2024:

"Later, we were passed to the *Azov* militants, the 12th *Azov* brigade. They held me for two weeks. <...> Those who took prisoners, the 95th brigade, did not beat. The *Azov* fighters did. They beat and tortured. They tortured some servicemen with electricity. They tied our hands, beat us with clubs. Then they broke my rib. They were kicking and beating me with a fire extinguisher. If they got bored in the evening, they got together, came and beat us, simply because they had nothing to do."



**Under fabricated pretexts, prisoners were subjected to physical exertion:**

"We would march for two hours at a time. They would deliberately look for our faults to make us turn on each other. Sometimes their officers would flat-out lie: 'My pack of cigarettes went missing. You messed up.' That's it, they would get everyone outside, even though no cigarettes were ever actually gone."

**Torture and beating at the *Azov* military base in the Sumy Region:**

"They beat me aiming for the kidneys, beat my arms. They broke my rib. They were kicking and beating with a fire extinguisher. They beat me up for almost 24 hours. They asked, 'Why did you come to our land?' I said, 'I have never come to the Ukrainian land, I protected my own land.' Nevertheless, they beat me and abused in different ways."

***Azov* militants threatened those captured with death:**

"They threatened me 'If something goes wrong, we will shoot you. What do we need you for? '"

**Torture and abuse:**

"Two people used to come by in the evening. They were either drugged or drunk, we did not figure it out. Those men abused us, took us out and beat. They were wearing masks. During the day, they did not come. By day, their senior officer came in, saying, 'Just do not hit them in the face.' Then they would abuse us either half the night or sometimes all night. They beat and intimidated, saying, 'We will shoot or hang you.' One guy was tortured by electric shocks. They took him to another room and after he came back, he told us about it."

**They used batons and a fire extinguisher for beatings:**

"My hands tied up, I was first beaten with a baton. Afterwards, when they changed my clothes, they hit me with a fire extinguisher on the back. They just took a fire extinguisher and hit me with it on the back. They broke my rib. I could not stand up, sit down or breathe normally for a month, I guess: all blue, all in bruises."

**Description of an underground prison in the backyard of a private house:**

"A concrete basement in the backyard. A roof was built over it. There was a couch for the guards. They made shifts every two hours. <...> The basement was about three meters by two. There were quite many people (prisoners in the basement) crowded there, about 20 people. They were brought there and had to stand. I spent 24 hours there. And some guys were there for a month."

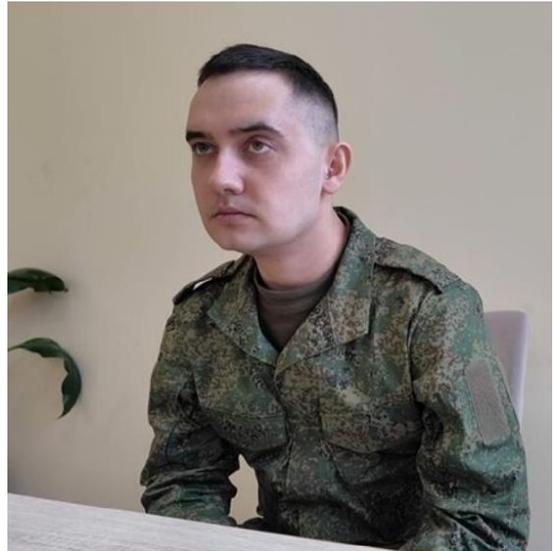
**Case No. 7 – Grigory Artemovich Avakyants, born in 1998, serviceman, motorized rifleman, was taken prisoner in the vicinity of Chasov Yar, DPR, in January 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

**Conditions of detention in the "secret prison":**

"I was in the basement with no air, no walks, and no windows for a year and 19 days."

**The AFU militants used POWs as human shields:**

"We were captured. They took the armour off us. They put a gun to my head and told me that if I made any attempt to escape, I would be shot first and then my fellow officer. And they continued to assault the trench, sheltering behind us. We were in front of them. Those people were behind us, holding assault rifles to our heads, using us as a human shield, and continued to assault the trench line."



**The order is to take no prisoners and to finish off the injured:**

"What good can I say about them? They finished off the injured. They said they had been told by their commanders to kill all and everyone, take no prisoners and provide no medical assistance."

**Making propaganda videos under coercion:**

"They started filming videos making us apologise to their wives and their mothers. Those people forced us to tell them that we were invaders and we came to their territory. And their husbands or their sons were now fighting against us. And that was what we had to apologise for."

**Abuse and death threats:**

"I was the first to be taken in for questioning. They forced me into a chair. They took a hammer. They kicked me in the knee first. The blow was not too strong, but I felt it. And I was told that if I lied in any way, I would have my head bashed in with that hammer." <...> "They wanted to shoot me. They put an assault rifle to my head and told me I had no value. They also said that not four but only three people were reported as captured. So, they did not need me."

**"Secret prison" in a civilian storage shed in Chasov Yar:**

"Then the SSU officers arrived. They began interrogating. I was the first. While I was being interrogated, another man from my unit, also captured (I do not remember his name, but I know his nickname), was beaten with an iron pipe. At the far end of the shed, there were storage facilities. He was beaten with an iron pipe while I was interrogated. <...> He was then shown a room; I did not see that room. But he told me that our servicemen were lying dead there, about five or six people. He was told that if he lied, he would be shot too."

**Moral coercion and humiliation:**

"After another three hours of interrogation, Viktor Kononov and I were taken to a room. Initially, there were five SSU officers there, then another one came and one civilian. They started forcing us to make videos there too, to apologise to the families. They showed various videos: with dismemberments, with dead people, claiming that we have done it, that we were the ones having shot them, killed civilians. In response, we tried to say that we did not know anything about it and there had never been any such orders. They 'did not believe' us. Five of them promised they would not beat us, with a sixth saying, 'I am not promising you that.' Afterwards, he beat us with his fists and feet."

**Coercion to cooperate with the SSU:**

"About two hours later, they brought Nesterenko and the one who had been beaten with a pipe – Igor. Those people brought them in and forced us under the cameras to sign a pledge that we would cooperate with the SSU after the exchange, and that we should reveal the information. We were told our new nicknames. We were also forced to write down addresses and phone numbers of our parents and close relatives, our own mobile numbers, and addresses where we could live. We read that information in front of the camera. Nesterenko was bleeding, and they replaced the sheets of paper several times. He was told that if he dirtied up the paper again, he would be punished."

**Murder of a POW by an SSU officer:**

"Three more fighters of the 4th Lugansk Brigade were brought there. Subsequently, one of these fighters was shot dead in this shed by an SSU officer. I did not see it personally, but I was told this by two surviving fighters."

**The SSU underground prison – "San Sanych's Basement":**

"They brought us into a basement, where I subsequently spent a year and 19 days. There was a man who had spent a year and a half in there without coming out, and two others who had spent ten months each. We were brought downstairs. There were two guards there. They were always wearing masks. Then we found out it was the premises of the unit that the Main Directorate of Intelligence used."

**San Sanych, a warden:**

"There is no one to ensure respect of the Geneva Convention in this basement. Senior Sergeant San Sanych is the leader there. He always wears a mask. I guess he studied psychology, since he has a personal conversation with each new prisoner. He is constantly making eye contact and asking leading questions, compiling his personal characteristics of the POWs."

**Abuse and torture:**

"It is forbidden to swear. If one swears even once, San Sanych makes the person standing in a 'hypotenuse' pose. This means taking a person's shoes off and placing him up against a wall. He places the arms against the wall as wide as possible and spreads the legs to hold the wall at 45 degrees under the weight of one's own body. Meanwhile, one is kicked in the legs so that one's feet slide apart and the person falls down. When I was a doctor there, there were a lot of times I carried unconscious guys back to their places because they had fainted. <...> There is a twenty-four hour hypotenuse for every offensive word."

**Conditions in the underground SSU prison in Kiev:**

"Conditions of detention: two meals a day, no walking, no smoking, no windows in the basement, lack of air... People's blood pressure drops to 90/60 mm Hg."

**Psychological violence:**

"Among the things San Sanych enjoyed doing was lining people in this basement and talking to us, showing 'dismemberment' videos, with violent acts, telling us that this was supposedly awaiting us if we agreed to return to Russia."

**Food:**

"There is food that has already gone sour. There were a lot of cases when the food was sour. After eating this food, people felt weak and suffered bloating the next day. They frequently went to the toilet because the food was bad. A sack of bread, half a sack, or just the leftovers could be brought for 100 people. Irregular quantity. Just

soups alone could be provided for two weeks. There are neither first nor second courses. There is no regular amount of food either. You get what you get. If someone starts complaining to San Sanych that this is non-compliance with the Geneva Conventions, he replies, 'Shut up. We do not give a damn about the Geneva Convention. In general, all of these structures require abolishing. Neither the United Nations nor the Geneva Convention is working.' 'No one knows you are here. It is true that you are accounted for as POWs, you are an exchange reserve. But, according to the documents, you are detained elsewhere. When an inspection comes, it takes seconds to write that you have been moved to a pre-detention centre or that you are on your way somewhere'."

**I saw many POWs who underwent torture:**

"A lot of guys are arriving with their fingers cut off. As a doctor, I provided treatment for them. POWs were put in the electric chair, poured with cold water, beat until bruises. A lot of guys came to my place from another similar unofficial basement where the electric chair was used <...> I have seen about ten people with severed limbs. They are taken away afterwards. Some POWs were brought in with frostbite. <...> Beatings. Some POWs who came had bruises all over their bodies. They were so crippled they did not get out of bed for days. <...> Mostly, electricity was used – clamps were placed on the genitals, hands and feet, all doused with water. This was done for several days in a row alternating with beatings."

**Case No. 8 – Sergey (surname and patronymic missing at the interviewee's request), 39 years old, serviceman, motorized rifleman, was taken prisoner in the territory of the LPR in February 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

While carrying out a combat mission in the territory of the LPR in the Kupyansk combat direction, a group of servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces found itself surrounded and, following a prolonged fighting, was taken into Ukrainian captivity. The fighters fulfilled the demand of the militants – they laid down their weapons and left the concealment to surrender into captivity. They hoped that the enemy would assist **their injured** fellow; however, he **was simply shot dead**:

"We told them that we had an injured there. They came in and shot him down. They could have bandaged him, could have provided medical assistance, could have taken him prisoner. But he was shot down – they didn't bother."

#### **Interrogations with beatings:**

"We were led with our hands and eyes bound in an unknown direction where we were handed over to other people. We were given water to drink, then they started kicking us in the legs. Then we walked, again, for about half an hour. They put us in the car. And brought us somewhere... There, they started beating us, undressing us, and finding out about our tattoos. The interrogations were held with severe beatings."

After the militants learnt that Sergey had previously served in the *Wagner Group*, their attitude towards him deteriorated significantly. **The beatings and torture became extremely severe:**

The conscripted and contract soldiers were treated somewhat gentler, but I was treated in a very biased manner, with utmost savagery."

#### **Electric shock torture:**

"We were taken there and undressed. It was winter, February 2024. They had us undressed amid beating and shouting. They took us to an outbuilding, hosed us with water and told me to run to the garage. There was an iron chair. I sat on the chair, it had straps. They strapped my hands and feet. There was a device on the table; I did not even get what it was. And there were pegs. They attached them to genitals and a lip. And they increased the power. They just abused us. There weren't any interrogations."

**During torture, the Ukrainian militants coerced the prisoners into collaboration:**

"They made us phone our family, extorted money. They suggested that we collaborated with them and entered the *Russian Volunteer Corps*. I shouted, 'Kill me!' And they said, 'You are not going to die that easily. You are going to die, but not that easily!' I don't remember who it was, the *Right Sector* or not, I cannot say for sure. It was infantry. They said to us, 'We will hand you over to the infantry.' I don't know who was in the Kupyansk direction. But seemingly, we were interrogated in Kupyansk because it didn't take us long to get there. They beat us using bats, tortured us using an electric chair, and forced us to work, set the dogs on us. Each shift treated me in a very biased manner."

**The SSU underground prison – "San Sanych's Basement":**

"Then San Sanych came for us. He was a SSU officer. He took us to his basement. That is, we had already been taken to Kiev. He took us to the basement. We were moving blindfolded. They told him that I was from *Wagner*. After we got there and after they took the blindfolds off, we realized that we were in a basement."

**Torture by the SSU officers:**

"They bandaged my legs because they were already turning black. And Sanych started to beat too, interrogations resumed. He punched me in the head. <...> Then the SSU officers came wearing masks. They began to 'trash' me again because I had been in *Wagner*. One of them saw that my legs were bandaged and started aiming his blows at my legs."

**Coercing to appear in propaganda videos:**

"Then they told me that I had to film a video, saying bad things about the President, saying that the people in Belgorod are dissatisfied, that there is war in Belgorod because of our President, that our army should not come here to fight, there is death here and that we will never take over the city of Kupyansk. They gathered us in a crowd and forced us to read aloud that our President is bad and shout 'Glory to Ukraine'."

**Interrogations and beatings in the underground prison:**

"Then the legs festered, flesh started to come off, and San Sanych took me to a prison in Kiev. As I understood, the basement was the place where the prisoners of war were held unofficially. <...> At Sanych's, interrogations were conducted; they came to film the videos. <...> I said I knew nothing because I was just a private, simply a

rifleman. What do I know? They didn't believe me, so they beat me. When they filmed the interview, they were standing behind me. If you say something wrong, they turn the camera off and start beating you. They say, 'You are saying it wrong. You have to say it differently.' Then they explain what you have to say, and then you speak."

### **Handover from the underground prison to Kharkov pre-detention centre No. 1:**

"Sanych handed me over to the SSU officers and they drove me to the prison in their car. As I understood, at Sanych's was an unofficial place. The SSU pretended to have brought me. They handed me over to prison wardens, who took me there. They started swearing badly, as usual, smacked me on the back of the head and locked in a cell."

### **Toes amputation without anaesthesia in Kharkov pre-detention centre No. 1:**

"They began to take fingerprints. They looked at my feet. They made some notes. As I understood, it was done for medical purposes, so that they knew what was wrong with me. I could barely stand on my feet; I was going up to the cell on all fours."

"The Red Cross arrived. They had doctors. They said I had to be taken to the hospital. Amputation had to be done or gangrene would set in. 'We don't care. We know ourselves what to do,' they answered (staff of the pre-detention centre). And the centre's doctor cut off my toes on one of my feet while I was conscious. Without anaesthesia."

### **Absence of medical assistance:**

"In early March 2024, I was taken to Lvov to *West-1* camp. After I got to the camp, we were quarantined. I said that I had problems with my feet. They said they would help, I went to them but they only changed bandages."

### **Second toes amputation without anaesthesia:**

"Then I was taken to the hospital to see a surgeon. He simply cut off the toes on another foot up to the joint. No anaesthesia was used. <...> So I was placed in the disabled unit. The treatment was provided at its minimum. Only bandages were changed, and it was done by POWs themselves."

**Case No. 9 Vyacheslav Vyacheslavovich Yeregin, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner near the city of Yasinovataya, DPR, in July 2023. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

Vyacheslav Vyacheslavovich Eremin was ambushed during a fight on the Donetsk-Kramatorsk road, DPR. Having been hit on the head with a gun butt, he lost consciousness and was captured. Afterwards, he was taken to the underground prison of Azov neo-Nazi unit, where he was immediately subjected to beating and torture:

"They take me to *Azov*, get me undressed, I have no clothes on. Two of our guys were already lying there. They took me down to the basement. There was concrete floor. They took the blindfolds off during interrogation. They were all wearing masks. They made me sit at the table with no clothes on. Then the investigator came in. A man with a baton stood behind me and warned me right away, 'Answer the questions quickly. If you think for more than ten seconds, then we will 'help' you with the answer'."



**The *Azov* underground prison was located in an industrial area in the city of Pokrovsk in the part of the DPR occupied by the Kiev regime:**

"There were four of us initially. It was in Pokrovsk, in the territory of a plant or an enterprise. There was a concrete basement. And we were there on this concrete floor with no clothes on and tied. Our hands were tied up with a sticky tape. The eyes were also tied with a sticky tape."

**Regular daily hours-long beatings in the *Azov* underground prison:**

"Everything began almost immediately, we started to 'get to know' each other. After the investigators left, these guys came. They put the table, brought vodka and snacks. It was around eight p.m. It was someone's birthday. And all of it started. At first, they beat us up with a bat. We were sitting. They were beating us until we fell. <...> From 7-8 p.m. to 4-5 a.m., they beat us every day. I spent 16 days there. They beat me with rubber hoses, practiced the hits on us. They made us kneel and turned on the anthem of Ukraine and the *Azov* anthem."

**The Ukrainian executioners beat the prisoners of war to the point that they could not understand whether they were alive or not:**

"At first, they put me inside a black bag after they beat me. I opened the eyes and saw him standing over me saying, 'Still alive, f\*\*\*\*r?' He spat and said, 'Son of a bitch, a tough one.' And then he left."

**For torture with electricity, the Ukrainian militants used TA-57 field telephone. They named this type of torture a "phone call to the Minister of Defence."**

"For the second time, they switched on the current and started to 'call the Minister of Defence.' But for some reason, 'he did not pick up the phone'. This phone was called 'tapik.' They connect the wires and crank. And we made this 'calls' to the point that I think I had a cardiac arrest. They put me inside a bag. The bag was next to me. I opened the eyes when I felt that something was beating my chest. Apparently, they were making the heart work again. And I had images flashing before my eyes.

**Prisoners of war were used as punching bags to practice hits:**

"He picked me out because, as I understood, I was of a stronger build than he. And that caught his eye. He was a kickboxer. He started to practice hits on me. Every time he came, he approached me immediately. His name was Artyom. <...> I could see him when I looked up because when he beat me hard, the sticky tape slid down a bit. And so all the time, day and night, we were blindfolded.

**Besides daily torture, prisoners of war were starved:**

"It lasted for 14 days. We were given no food at all. They only gave us water."

**Shooting from combat arms near one's head:**

"They fired a pistol near my head. He simply took the pistol out. I was on my knees. He fired a shot next to me and said, 'What were your thoughts?' I said that I had no time to think of anything."

**Threats to cut off genitals and injections of unknown substance into the bloodstream:**

"He wanted to cut off my balls. He turned on the angle grinder. I have a scar here. (Points to the inner side of the thigh near groin) He leaned it to the leg, made a small cut. He didn't continue to cut. Then he stopped and said, 'No, I will not cut off your balls.' And they took my hand, took a syringe and injected some substance. I felt nothing. I just felt that something had been injected. And I heard these words, 'They will exchange you, but you will die from AIDS.' What did he inject me? Maybe some blood, maybe something else? And that is what I have been thinking about for 20 months."

**Electric shock torture:**

"They tied two wires to the fingers, put the foot on the concrete and poured water. We were barefoot. And then they started to crank this 'tapik.' You are foaming at the

mouth, you lose consciousness. Muscles are absolutely stiffened. And you can do nothing. And that is all, they leave you. If you recover, fine then. And what if you do not? Those who had a weak heart were brought out. I do not know where they were put afterwards. <...> Once they gathered us all and commanded to join hands. We joined our hands, he tied the wires, started to crank and the whole crowd of us fell.

**During transportation to Kharkov pre-detention centre, militants from *Aidar* neo-Nazi unit and Ukrainian militants at checkpoints beat prisoners of war until they lost consciousness:**

"There were six or seven people in black – it was *Aidar*. And they started to get us out. They got out the first one, swallow-stretching him out with the slogan: 'You've ended up with Bandera's children, f\*\*\*ers! Now you gonna find out what this is.' And they started to swallow-stretch us out one by one. One of them approached and began tightly wrapping the head of one of us with some tape. And those who were standing behind and holding him started to hit him with truncheons wherever they could reach. Once a man was out, they threw him into the car. And they handled everyone like that. And then he said: 'Now we're going to stop. I'm warning you right away. The doors open – you shout 'Glory to Ukraine.' If not, you'll be shot with machine guns. Right on the spot.' We stop at the checkpoint. The rear door opens. Naturally, we shout: 'Glory to Ukraine.' We simply had no other option. They come up, say in a calm voice: 'Glory to the heroes,' and start battering us into a pulp. They start ramming and hammering us with butts of machine guns and sticks. And this happened six times."

**During interrogation at Kharkov pre-detention centre, POWs were forced to say that the injuries inflicted during torture had been received on the battlefield, before they were captured:**

"There was a question: 'Where were you beaten to such an extent?' I could no longer understand whether to lie to him or tell the truth. I said, 'In Azov.' He said, 'No, you got these injuries on the battlefield, during assault operations. Is everything clear?' – 'Yes, of course it is clear'."

**In the *West-1* colony, POWs were forced to unbearably hard physical labour:**

"Then we ended up in *West-1*, Lvov. It is a colony. There we were simply morally humiliated. We were not beaten there. We worked from 6 a.m. till 10 p.m. The colony was under construction. We hauled concrete, stones, earth."

**Case No. 10 – Alexey Alexandrovich Vasiliev, born in 1976, serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces, was taken prisoner near the city of Ugledar, in the summer of 2024. Freed from Ukrainian captivity as a result of an exchange on 5 February 2025.**

**Conditions of detention in an underground prison:**

"Initially, they put handcuffs on me, which fixed my hands and began to squeeze when I moved my hands. I spent almost a day in these handcuffs. When they took them off, the flesh and skin had been worn away to the point that you could see my bones."

**In between the two-hour beatings, the POWs were taken away for interrogation. If the Ukrainian executioners were not satisfied with the answers, the POWs were returned to the basement, where the beatings continued:**



"And it began thereafter. Every two to three hours they took us up from this basement. They actually broke my hand. They wanted to cut off this finger (the thumb). They broke the fingers on the other hand. <...> Every two hours you come to your senses more or less. They lift you out of the basement, and it all starts again. He interrogates you, if you don't remember (what they want to know), two other guys in masks come in, take you down to the basement and beat you there."

**Food in the underground prison:**

"We were given a small jar of porridge for the six of us. There are these little muesli-chocolates. Half a chocolate bar per person, and a bottle of water."

**Food in the *West-4* colony in the Lvov region:**

"The food, of course, I would say, was disgusting. You couldn't tell whether it was cabbage or water with cabbage. Recently, when the Red Cross started coming, things have more or less improved. But initially, it was something like that."

**Torture with hot metal:**

"I saw it in Kharkov pre-detention centre. A young man of about 30 years old, he had the USSR coat of arms (hammer and sickle) burned into his back. They branded it into him just after he was captured."

**Any improvised means were used for beatings:**

"When they brought us to Kharkov, the doctor was shocked. She said, 'I've never seen anything like this.' She documented the beatings and said, 'What should I write here? You are nothing but raw meat. No single spot intact.' They beat us very badly. They only left the face untouched. They kicked and hit with whatever they could get their hands on. There were rubber hoses, wooden sticks, two bats and a shovel handle. They broke the shovel when they wanted to cut off my finger. They said, 'What do you need it for? You won't be able to hold a machine gun therefore.' They poked and poked with the shovel and broke it. And then they beat me with the handle."